Clinical Experiences of Undergraduate Nursing Students Who Have Personal Backgrounds with Mental Illness

Ashley Roach, PhD, RN, Assistant Professor of Clinical Nursing; School of Nursing; Oregon Health and Science University

Keywords

Students, Nursing; Education, Nursing; Education, Nursing, Baccalaureate; Mental Health; Mental Disorders; Qualitative Research; Bias; Clinical judgment

Abstract

Background/Innovation/Goal:
Nursing students come to the profession with a variety of experiences and backgrounds, including those that involve living with or caring for someone with a mental illness (Roach & Tadesse, 2023). Tanner's Clinical Judgment Model highlights the importance of nurses' backgrounds and how they influence personal beliefs, biases, and clinical judgments, as well as intent to practice in a particular care setting (Roach & Tadesse, 2023; Tanner et al., 2022). Furthermore, caring for a client with a mental illness may bring up current or past experiences, which students may negatively or positively associate with the care they provide. Currently, there is a nationwide shortage of mental health nurses (Turale & Nantsupawat, 2021). Therefore, it is imperative to understand the factors that influence nursing students' intent to practice in mental health settings, especially how their personal backgrounds and experiences in nursing school may influence this decision. There has been little research conducted to understand how having a personal background of living with or caring for someone with a mental illness influences nursing students' experiences caring for a client with a mental illness and how these experiences may influence students' intent to practice in mental health settings in the future. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine clinical experiences of undergraduate nursing students in mental health settings who have personal backgrounds with mental health conditions.

Methods

A qualitative research study using phenomenological design will be used to answer the research question: "what is the lived experience of nursing students caring for a client with a mental illness when they themselves have personal backgrounds living with or caring for someone with a mental illness?" Nursing students will be recruited from an undergraduate program after completion of a clinical rotation in a mental health setting. This study will be approved by the OHSU IRB before recruitment and interviews begin. Transcripts will be recorded, reviewed, and analyzed by the primary investigator and reviewed by the OHSU Qualitative Research Interest Group for added rigor.

Impact/Effectiveness

This study will be limited to nursing students in an undergraduate nursing program in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States. Participation will be voluntary and may not be representative of all demographic groups. Despite these limitations, this study offers a unique opportunity to understand what it is like to care for someone with a mental illness while having a personal background with mental illness and how this experience may influence future intent to practice in a mental health setting. Qualitative methodology will provide rich data and a deeper understanding than from what can be derived from a survey.

Findings/Results

Findings from this study will be presented thematically.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

All participants who meet inclusion and exclusion criteria will be eligible to participate regardless of age, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender identity or expression, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. Having a diverse representation of participants will contribute to richer findings that include a variety of perspectives.

Possible Applications

Results from this study have the potential to influence future nursing school pedagogy. Understanding the lived experiences of nursing students with personal backgrounds with mental illness, can shape how mental health content is taught as well as how nursing schools prepare students for clinical rotations in mental health settings.

Measurable Learning Objectives

- At the end of this presentation, participants will be able to:
- Understand the importance of backgrounds in influencing beliefs, bias, and clinical judgments.
- Recognize how backgrounds with mental health may influence intent to practice in mental health settings.